

Audiences and Emotions in Eustathios of Thessalonike's Commentaries on Homer

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In the last thirty years literary and historical studies have shown an increasing awareness of the importance of social and material context to the study of medieval audiences and their practices of reading.¹ “Literacy” itself is now preferably inflected in the plural rather than in the singular.² Not only is reading seen as a collective act but it is also regarded as a socially defining one. The way in which a given text is read and experienced contributes to the way its readers are situated within or outside a given group. The literary level of the text does not by itself define the proficiency or the social status of its readership. Instead, the readers’ response matters more. Medieval authors, and not least Byzantine authors, were well aware of the diverse nature of their audience as well as of the different responses elicited by the text they produced.³ This

however was true also for the revered authors belonging to the classical tradition.

Against this backdrop the present paper aims to offer a fresh reading of the *Parekbolai* on Homer composed by Eustathios of Thessalonike in the twelfth century.⁴ Eustathios’s commentaries reveal a sharp mind at work on the Homeric text; but what is more, they offer a privileged perspective on contemporary cultural practices. They tell us about different audiences and reader responses, testifying to diverse ways of engaging with a tradition that was felt to be at once authoritative and problematic. My aim is to unravel the interactions between readers and text that surface in the *Parekbolai*, by focusing on two different kinds of readership described by Eustathios. This will lead me to highlight some important information about the aesthetic taste of contemporary audiences, as well as about their social self-positioning. I will thus show that Eustathios wrote the commentaries with a socially and culturally diversified audience in mind.

As is well known, Eustathios’s commentaries on Homer have primarily an educational purpose. Paolo

1 I will confine myself here to mentioning the seminal B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983).

2 See the recent M. Amsler, *Affective Literacies: Writing and Multilingualism in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2001); G. Cavallo, “Le pratiche di lettura,” in *Lo spazio letterario del medioevo*, vol. 3, *Le culture circostanti*, part 1, *La cultura bizantina*, ed. G. Cavallo (Rome, 2004), 569–604; and idem, “Alfabetismi e letture a Bisanzio,” in *Lire et écrire à Byzance*, ed. B. Mondrain (Paris, 2006), 97–109.

3 See G. Cavallo, *Alla ricerca del doppio pubblico di Michele Psello*, in *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine: Le texte en tant que message immédiat*, ed. P. Odorico (Paris, 2012), 237–46 and, above all, the comprehensive study on the eleventh century by F. Bernard, *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry, 1025–1081* (Oxford, 2014).

4 For a bibliography on Eustathios’s life and works see P. Odorico, *Thessalonique: Chroniques d’une ville prise* (Paris, 2005), 25, n. 18 and A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2007), 307–16. On the composition of the commentaries see now the detailed analysis in E. Cullhed, “Eustathios of Thessalonike: *Parekbolai* on Homer’s *Odyssey* 1–2” (PhD diss., Uppsala, 2014), 4*–26*.

Cesaretti, and more recently Eric Cullhed,⁵ have shown how Eustathios carefully tries to differentiate his work on Homer from other exegetical writings produced under commission, for example, Tzetzes' *Homeric Allegories*, first commissioned by Eirene (Bertha of Sulzbach), or his own *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes*, explicitly dedicated to John Doukas.⁶ Eustathios's Homeric exegesis is not commissioned by members of the extended imperial family nor does it target exclusively or explicitly the Constantinopolitan elite circles. On this basis, it has been argued that, unlike Tzetzes, Eustathios does not categorize different audiences or different levels of readership.⁷ This is both true and not true: it is true that students represent the primary, intended readership of the *Parekbolai*, the ideal audience addressed by Eustathios. It is also true that Eustathios looks at the poems by taking Homer's internal perspective. And yet the commentator does distinguish different audiences of the Homeric poems. In other words, we need to distinguish between the audience of the commentaries and the audience *within* the commentaries. In both cases, moreover, the group of Homer's readers or listeners is not quite uniform.

As far as Eustathios's audience is concerned, at the beginning of his commentary on the *Iliad* the author singles out his potential readers. Using a military metaphor, he declares that he wants to supply provisions for "the one who marches out" (τῷ διεξοδεύοντι). By this he means not the learned man (ἀνδρὶ λογίῳ), but rather the young at the beginning of their education (νέῳ ἄρτι μανθάνοντι) or else those who have already gone through the process of learning and whose memory needs to be refreshed (μαθόντι μὲν, δεομένῳ δὲ ἀναμνήσεως).⁸ The second group includes more advanced readers who may already have established themselves in their careers and are consequently potential patrons, just like John Doukas, mentioned above.

When it comes to *Homer's audience*, it is also possible to single out different clusters of readers or listeners, with distinct approaches and reactions to the poems.⁹ Such a distinction fits well within Eustathios's educational framework. One of the main aims of the *Parekbolai* is rhetorical training: sensitivity to reader response is therefore crucial. Eustathios's students must be well equipped to deal with diverse audiences, adjusting their performances to varied needs and demands. By pointing to specific needs and responses on the part of Homer's audiences, Eustathios implicitly makes his students aware of the cultural and, ultimately, economic dynamic they will be immersed in. For many of them, moreover, a full understanding of such dynamics was crucial in the competitive market of Komnenian commissions. Finally, Eustathios's construction of the poem's listeners gives us important clues regarding contemporary practices of reading.

Needless to say, there may be overlap in the behavior of the two groups of readers—those of the poems and those of the *Parekbolai*. After all, both reflect—or are constructed on the basis of—contemporary habits. In the present paper I concentrate on the way in which Eustathios differentiates Homer's audiences and describes their needs and the strategies adopted by the poet to meet them. In so doing, I show how contemporary practices of literacy affect the representation of the Homeric reader in the *Parekbolai*. At the same time I also tackle broader issues regarding the consumption of written texts in Byzantine culture.

The Gluttonous Reader

Eustathios's first exegetical move at the beginning of his *Parekbolai* on the *Iliad* is to explain the narrative rationale underlying the whole poem.¹⁰ According to Eustathios, Homer manages to enrich the material at hand by complicating the story through his technique

5 P. Cesaretti, *Allegoristi di Omero a Bisanzio: Ricerche ermeneutiche (XI–XII sec.)* (Milan, 1991), 222–23; Cullhed, "Eustathios of Thessalonike," 9*–12*.

6 On the *Allegories* see again Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 134–38 and M. J. Jeffreys, "The Nature and Origins of the Political Verse," *DOP* 28 (1974): 150–55. On John Doukas and Eustathios's exegesis on Dionysius the Periegetes see n. 25 below.

7 Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 216, 224–25.

8 See *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:3.5–8 Van der Valk; and Cullhed, "Eustathios of Thessalonike," 9*–18*.

9 Cullhed points out that Eustathios often distinguishes between more or less proficient readers of Homer, and alludes to the poet's awareness of such a diversified audience ("Eustathios of Thessalonike," 35*–37*). The distinction, I would argue, goes even deeper.

10 The very first pages are devoted to the *inscriptions* of the single books (in the case of the first book: Ἀλφά, Παψφδιά, Γράμμα). Eustathios also drafts two titles for each book, the first one in prose, the second consisting of one hexameter—most likely to facilitate memorization (1:9.1–11.13 Van der Valk).

(μέθοδος).¹¹ Neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey*, he argues, has a linear development. They do not follow the narrated events from beginning to end, but both start *in medias res*. Homer was the first to introduce this narrative device, and is thus presented as the inventor of the very notion of plot.¹² Eustathios then goes on to describe the reader's response to the poet's undertaking. Surprisingly, he considers the possibility that such a nonlinear structure may not please the reader. A narrative beginning *in medias res*, he suggests, may even turn out to be annoying for a kind of audience that he notably labels as "gluttonous" (λίχνος):¹³

Ἐμεθώδευσε δὲ ὁ ποιητὴς τοῦτο ἅμα μὲν διὰ τὸ καινοπρεπὲς καὶ τῷ ἀνελπίστῳ ξενίζον, τὸ γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ἀρξασθαι οὔτε καινόν τι ἔχει καὶ ὁ ἀκροατὴς δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ πολὺ οὕτως ἐλπίζει γενέσθαι, ἅμα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ δεινότερον, τουτέστιν οἰκονομικώτερον. Οὐδὲ γὰρ εἶχεν ἄλλως ἀξιολογον ὕλην γραφῆς, διότι τὰ μὲν προηγησάμενα ἐννέα ἔτη ἀνειμένως εἶχον τῆς μάχης, πολεμαρχοῦντος τοῦ ἀνδρειοτάτου Ἀχιλλέως καὶ τοὺς Τρῶας ὡς τὰ πολλὰ τῇ πόλει διὰ δέος ἐγκατακλείοντος. Ὅτε δὲ αὐτὸς ἐμήνισε, συνετάθη ὁ πόλεμος ἀναθαρρησάντων τῶν Τρώων. Καὶ τεχνικὴν εὐπορίαν ἐνταῦθα εὔρε τοῦ γράφειν ὁ ποιητὴς, ὃν καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτὸν μιμησάμενοι τραγικοὶ τε καὶ κωμικοὶ καθ' ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ αὐτοὶ μετεχειρίζοντο τὰ οἰκεῖα ποιήματα. Ἡ αὐτὴ δὲ τῷ Ὀμήρῳ μέθοδος καὶ ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐα διεχειρίσθη. Ἐὰν δέ τις λίχνος τὴν ἀκοὴν καὶ ζητητικὸς τὰ εἰς μάθησιν δυσκόλως ἔχη περὶ τὴν μέθοδον βαρυνόμενος, ὅτι τὸ τέλος μαθὼν ἀνήκουστος ἔσται τῶν πρὸ τοῦ τέλους, πραϋνέσθω οἷς οὐδὲ τὰ ἐν ἀρχῇ παραλείπουσιν οἱ ὄντως ἐκ τῶν

τελευταίων ἀρχόμενοι, ἀλλ' εὐμεθόδως καὶ αὐτὰ τῇ τοῦ βιβλίου ὁλότητι παρενσπείρουσιν.

The poet adopted this technique on the one hand because of the novelty and the surprise ensuing from the unexpected—for a natural beginning from the first events does not offer anything new and it is what audiences would expect in most cases—and on the other, because it was more powerful, that is to say, it entailed a better organization of the narrative. For he did not have a remarkable subject matter anyway, since the preceding nine years of battle were rather relaxed, with the most valiant Achilles leading the war and the Trojans shut within their city in fear most of the time. But after he became wrathful, the war grew in intensity, as the Trojans gained courage. Thus, the poet found this artful solution for his writing, and he was bound to be imitated by later tragedians and comedians, who used this strategy in a comparable way for their own poems. Moreover, the same structure was applied by Homer himself to the *Odyssey*. Now, if anyone who has a gluttonous ear and strives for learning feels oppressed and complains about such a technique, on the grounds that, after knowing the final outcome, he will not hear about the preceding events, please let him calm down. For even those who actually start from the concluding events do not omit beginnings; on the contrary, they accurately distribute them through the whole book.¹⁴

In this passage Eustathios partly relies on the Hellenistic *scholia vetera*, acknowledging the surprise factor inherent in the *Iliad*'s proem. Taking their cue from Zenodotos's interpretation, the scholia bT and AT regarded the prolepsis in the first lines of the *Iliad* as a way to "entice" and "wake the audience up," tempting them to the rest of the story.¹⁵ Eustathios's page, moreover, resonates with ancient discussions of the

11 This is the forte of Homer's technique, which also redeems poor subject matter (see above all *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:7.6–12 Van der Valk). On the term μέθοδος see M. Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii Ad Homerii Iliadem Pertinentes* (Leiden, 1976), vol. 2, LXVII–LXVIII.

12 Such an interpretation ultimately goes back to Aristotle and was already available in the Homeric scholia: Schol. bT *Il.* 1b, 1:4.23–26 Erbse, and also AT *Il.* 1a D, 1:3.10–14 Erbse; D *Il.* 1.1, p. 4 van Thiel. R. Nünlist comments on the whole dossier in his paper "Some Ancient Views on Narrative, Its Structure and Working," in *Defining Greek Narrative*, ed. D. Cairns and R. Scodel (Edinburgh, 2014), 156–74.

13 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:11.17–31 Van der Valk.

14 All the translations, where not otherwise indicated, are mine.

15 Cf. Schol. bT *Il.* 1 1b, 1:4.29 Erbse, and also AT *Il.* 1 1a D, 1:3.11 Erbse. See R. Nünlist, *The Ancient Critic at Work: Terms and Concepts of Literary Criticism in Greek Scholia* (Cambridge, 2009), 137–38.

advantages and disadvantages of prolepsis and proemia in the narrative economy.¹⁶ Yet in Eustathios's presentation listeners are not annoyed by the excess of information, as happens when anticipations are too detailed; on the contrary, they are rather worried that beginning *in medias res* may prevent them from learning what happened *before*. In fact, Eustathios reshapes and adapts his sources to fit the social (and didactic) context in which his work appeared. In this respect, a key term to understand fully the passage quoted above is the adjective *λῆχνος*, "gluttonous" or "greedy for food." The intent of this image goes well beyond the conventional metaphor equating the consumption of food and texts.¹⁷

Eustathios imagines an audience that is too impatient to go carefully and diligently through Homer's text, that overreacts to the plot, and that is at best only partially aware of the poet's narrative devices. It is an audience that wants to be fed as many details as possible. Eustathios's cautionary words against "literary gluttony" are not an isolated case. When it comes to reading within the educational setting or for moral and didactic purposes, eagerness is often regarded by Byzantine authors as dangerous and counterproductive. It contrasts with the slow and patient consumption of texts, required especially when tackling religious or theological writings.¹⁸ Enthusiasm needs

to be tempered through self-control, lest it burn out too rapidly, impairing the learning process. For the same reasons, piecemeal reading is also heavily discouraged. A paradigmatic example of this attitude is provided by the recommendations imparted by Kekaumenos to his son.¹⁹ Kekaumenos advises against quick and utilitarian reading, advocating instead slow and careful rumination on the text.²⁰

Λιχνεία, I argue, epitomizes reading practices that run counter to these principles. Gluttonous readers are dynamic consumers, moved by passionate rather than

untimely eagerness to learn. On Psellos's didactic method, with a passing mention of *Theologica* 95, see P. A. Agapitos, "Teachers, Pupils and Imperial Power in Eleventh-Century Byzantium," in *Pedagogy and Power*, ed. Y. Lee Too and N. Livingstone (Cambridge, 1998), 170–91, here 180–81 and n. 47. On the scholastic organization of the capital in this period see Bernard, *Writing and Reading*, 110–13.

19 On Kekaumenos's background see Bernard, *Writing and Reading*, 159 with previous bibliography. Cf. also F. Bernard, "The Ethics of *Authorship*: Some Tensions in the Eleventh Century," in *The Author in Middle Byzantine Literature: Modes, Functions, and Identities*, ed. A. Pizzone (Berlin, 2014), 41–60, here 46–48.

20 *Strategikon* III 142 (190.14–21, esp. 19–21): *σπερμολόγου γὰρ ἔργον τὸ μὴ διελθεῖν πᾶσαν τὴν βίβλον ἐκ δευτέρου καὶ τρίτου, ἀλλ' ἐκλέξασθαι ὀλίγα πρὸς τὸ φλυαρεῖν* ("For only a shallow person does not read the whole book, twice or three times, but plucks just few elements to blather around"). *Σπερμολόγος* refers literally to birds picking up seeds here and there. In Attic Greek the term is used to designate people who pick up discarded wares at marketplaces, and thus comes to mean "worthless" (see Demosthenes, *De Corona* 127, 2 with the relevant scholion p. 306, 9–12 Dindorf; and cf. Demosthenes, *Rede für Ktesiphon über die Kranz, Erläutert und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Hermann Wankel* [Heidelberg, 1976], 2:677–78). The same meaning is mentioned by Eustathios in *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:25–28 Stallbaum. The term *σπερμολόγος* ("babblers," 233) is later found in pagan texts to scorn Christians and their arguments. In the *Acts of the Apostles* 17, 18, *σπερμολόγος* is used by Stoic and Epicurean philosophers to designate Paul (cf. also Tatian, *Oration to the Greeks* 6.1.10). Both meanings—the literal and the metaphorical—survive in early Christian and Byzantine literature. Hesychius gives precisely *φλύαρος* (Σ 1468, 1, s.v. *σπερμολόγος*) as a synonym. Photios's *Lexicon*, moreover, besides listing among the possible meanings the usual "wordy, talkative," "babbling," and "picking up seeds," provides an explanation that appears to be crucial to our concerns (Σ 455, p. 385 Theodoridis): "Εοικεν δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ τὰ σπέρματα ἀναλέγειν· λέγεται οὖν ἀπὸ τούτου ὁ εὐτελής καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητος ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἴσως ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων διαζῶν, *σπερμολόγος*" ("It seems that it comes from collecting up seeds: on this ground *σπερμολόγος* is said of cheap and easily despicable individuals and perhaps of individuals who live off other people"). If the latter shade of meaning is actually retained in Kekaumenos's passage, then it further underlines the utilitarian aspects of desultory (and undigested) reading.

16 The relevant passages are listed and illustrated in Nünlist, "Some Ancient Views," 164–68: schol. bT *Il.* XI 604c, 3:238.74–77; bT *Il.* XII 116–17, 3:321.40–44 Erbse; Ps. Demetrios, *On Elocution* 216.

17 Starting with the famous anecdote according to which Aeschylus contended that all his work was composed out of slices from Homer's banquet (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8.39.5, 347c). For Christian literature, see M. Mullett, "Food for the Spirit and Light for the Road: Reading the Bible in the *Life of Cyril Philoteos* by Nicholas Kataskapenos," in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. C. Holmes and J. Waring (Leiden, 2002), 139–64; with C. Holmes, "Written Culture in Byzantium," in *ibid.*, 19 offering a comparison with Skylitzes; D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, 2004), 144–46. On food metaphors in Eustathios see F. Kolovou, *Die Briefe des Eustathios von Thessalonike* (Munich, 2006), 57*–73*; more in general in Byzantine literature, *cadem*, "Die Rezeption der Platonischen *Opsopoiia* in der byzantinischen Literatur," in *Byzantinische Sprachkunst: Studien zur byzantinischen Literatur gewidmet Wolfram Hörandner zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Hinterberger and E. Schiffer (Berlin, 2007), 181–93. On Homer as a "cook," see Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 213.

18 This attitude emerges, for instance, in Psellos's school lectures (*Theologica* 85.95–105, p. 340; *Theologica* 95.2–10, p. 369 Gautier), where gluttony is associated with the pupils' young age and their

rational eagerness. They jump hastily from one passage to the next, keen on interacting with the narrative and wanting their needs quickly satisfied. They are also sensitive to linguistic embellishment, which is often at odds with serious content. Indeed, the desire for beauty, providing enjoyment and entertainment, appears to be more suitable for the consumption of lighter texts. A century or so before Eustathios, for instance, Psellos uses *λίχνος* to praise the beauty of language of Heliodoros's novel:²¹

Κεκαλλώπιστα δὲ καὶ ἐπεισοδίοις διηγῆμασι
χάριν, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, ἀφροδίσιον πνέουσι. καὶ
ἔστιν αὐτῷ τὸ μὲν εὐγλωττον καὶ τὴν λίχνον
καταμελιττοῦν ἀκοῇ[ν] ποιητικῶς κατεσκευασ-
μένον ἄνευ τοῦ φορτικοῦ, τὸ δὲ συνεστηκός τε καὶ
οἷον ἡρωϊκὸν καλλιπερία διακ[ε]χυμένον.

It is characterized by beauty of language and a poetic construction that feeds with honey the gluttonous listener but is free of vulgarity, as well as by its firmness and by its heroic quality, though flowing with beautiful language. (trans. A. R. Dyck, modified)

"Gluttony" or passionate eagerness is therefore acceptable for the consumption of erotic fiction and highly rhetoricized prose, but objectionable when reading and listening are purely oriented to learning.²²

Kekaumenos's words have been used to argue for the predominance of "intensive" reading among the Byzantines.²³ The *Strategikon*, however, is a prescriptive more than a purely descriptive text. In other words, its

concerns suggest that while "intensive" reading was indeed recommended, "extensive" reading was nevertheless possible. Accordingly, I contend that the adjective *λίχνος* encapsulates precisely the description of a readership given to "extensive" reading: looking for novelty and quantity, and unwilling to ruminate patiently on the text. As we shall see in the last sections, concerns about such practices of reading are long-lived in Byzantine literary history.

Λίχνος epitomizes a readership that is demanding, but also less resistant, if not less proficient or trained; one that is not ready to face the text complete with all its difficulties. This emerges also from the dedicatory epistle introducing Eustathios's exegesis on Dionysius Periegetes, where again we come across the notions of pleasurable, easily digestible food, and quantity²⁴:

Καὶ οὐκ ἀναπληροῖ μὲν ὡς ἀτελῇ εἰπόντα τὸν
Διονύσιον, οἷς δὲ ἐκεῖνος ἐχρήσατο, πλατυ-
κώτερον ἐπεξέρχεται, ὡς πρέπει λόγῳ πεζῷ, καὶ
ὡς οἷον εἰπεῖν ἐκμυζῶν τῆς ἐκεῖνου ἱστορίας ἅπαν
εἴ τι νόστιμον προσεπιλιπαίνει ἄλλως αὐτήν, καὶ
τὸ λεχθέν ἰσχνῶς ἐξάγει περιττότερον, καὶ τὸ
τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ λίχνον ἐκθεραπεύει, καὶ τὸ πολὺ
δὲ τοῦ πόνου παραιρεῖται. . . . Καὶ τοῦτο πραγ-
ματευόμενοι οὐ διορθούμεθα τὸν περιηγητὴν,
οὔτε τι τῶν δῆθεν οὐ δεόντως ἐλλειφθέντων ἀνα-
πληροῦμεν, ὡς καὶ ἀνόπιν ἔφαμεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τῆς
μετρικῆς ἐπελεύσεως ἀνάγκην παραμυθούμεθα
διὰ τὸ λίχνον τῆς ἀκροάσεως. Ἡ γὰρ τις ἂν φιλο-
μαθεῖν εἰδώς, εἴτα δὴ ἀκούσας τοῦ Διονυσίου
γῆς Βοιωτῶν καὶ Λοκρῶν καὶ Θεσσαλῶν καὶ
Μακεδόνων ἐν δυσὶν ἔπεσι μνησαμένου πρὸς
μόνον ὄνομα, καὶ μὴδὲν τι πλεον ἐξιστορήσαντος
περὶ αὐτῶν, οὐκ ἂν εἰς δέον λιχνεύσεται πλατύ-
τερον μαθεῖν τι περὶ αὐτῶν;

And it does not add what is needed to Dionysius's text, as if his words were incomplete, but rather it expands on his subject matter, as it is fitting for a prose work, and draining any succulent element from the story, as it were, it makes it even fatter; and what was expressed thinly is

21 *The Differences between Charikleia and Leukippe*, 92.32–36 Dyck. Indeed, the "gluttonous reader" does not appear very different from the reader of ancient fiction, as described by D. Konstan, "The Active Reader and the Ancient Novel," in *Readers and Writers in the Ancient Novel*, ed. M. Paschalis, S. Panayotakis, and G. Schmeling (Groningen, 2009), 1–17. It is not so surprising, then, that *λίχνοι* are mentioned in Psellos's assessment of *Charikleia*.

22 See n. 18 above.

23 I translate with "intensive" the type of reading that Cavallo labels as "intensivo." Cavallo contrasts "lettura intensiva" with "lettura estensiva," or "extensive reading," which does not imply slow reading from cover to cover. See G. Cavallo, "Tracce per una storia della lettura a Bisanzio," *BZ* 95 (2002): 423–44, here 432–35; idem, *Lire à Byzance* (Paris, 2006), 7 and passim. For an opposite view, see Konstan, "The Active Reader," 1, although many of the reading practices mentioned by Konstan are acknowledged and described also by Cavallo. On the Byzantine readers of novels and romances

see P. A. Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting (in) Byzantine Erotic Fiction," in *Lire et écrire à Byzance*, 125–76.

24 *Commentary on Dionysius the Periegete*, prefatory letter, p. 205.34–206.16 Müller.

now explained abundantly, doing a good service to the audience's greediness and relieving most of the labor. . . . And in so doing we did not emend the Periegete, nor did we add anything that was unduly left out, as we said above, but rather, we softened the constraints of the metrical exposition, for the sake of a greedy audience. Indeed, who, being consciously fond of learning, would not be greedy to learn more, after hearing Dionysios mention by name alone the land of the Boeotians, of the Lokrians, of the Thessalians, and this in just two scanty lines, without adding any further detail?

In these lines Eustathios states his intention to prepare a palatable exegesis for his dedicatee (and intended reader) John Doukas Kamateros.²⁵ An amateur literate himself, John is not expected to go through the difficulties of Dionysios's *Periegesis*. Rather, Eustathios gratifies him with narrative expansion and refined (but perhaps superfluous?) complication (περιττότερον): two ingredients designed to provide entertainment.²⁶ What is more, John and the implied readership of the exegesis on the Periegete are again depicted as active readers, well aware of their desires and keen to satisfy them by shaping the text. Quantity, novelty, and refinement of language are the main desiderata. In this respect, John Doukas behaves like Homer's readers. On the other hand, however, he also embodies the learned reader whose memory needs to be refreshed (μαθῶν, ἀναμνήσεως δεόμενος), outlined by Eustathios in the introduction to his commentary on the *Iliad*. Although not uninitiated, John is not a "professional" reader.

Not surprisingly, the same attitude is to be traced also in Tzetzes' exegetical work. Although Eustathios and Tzetzes did not work directly for the same patrons, they shared the same milieu—the relationship with the Kamateroi being a case in point. They also competed

for recognition and patronage, often breaking the rules of fairness.²⁷

In the first lines of the *Theogony*, dedicated to the Sebastokratorissa Eirene, Tzetzes significantly labels his patroness as λίχνος πρὸς λόγους (v. 19).²⁸ Such a definition is not derogatory per se. However, it subtly points to an attitude which, being characterized by a good share of eagerness and impetuosity, is typical for audiences of nonprofessional literati. Patrons want to be pleased quickly and abundantly by their protégés. In the *Letters* and in the *Historiae*,²⁹ Tzetzes provides us with a well-known account of the making of his *Allegories*.³⁰ There he significantly recalls how the superintendent of the other Eirene (Bertha of Sulzbach), deeply unsatisfied by the number of lines provided by Tzetzes and unimpressed with the quality of the work, would bluntly ask for more pages. Bertha has the impatience of the young and untrained reader. Moreover, true to the λιχνεία of her kin, she wants quantity, and proves to be not only a gluttonous reader but also an active one, shaping the agenda of "her" author.³¹ As we shall see in the next section, Homer's readership, as constructed by Eustathios, is equally proactive.

27 See E. Cullhed, "The Blind Bard and 'T': Homeric Biography and Authorial Personas in the Twelfth Century," *BMGS* 38 (2014), 49–67.

28 On this work see the still very informative C. Wendel, "Tzetzes," *RE* 7A (1948), 1985–1987. On Eirene as a patroness, see A. Rhoby, "Verschiedene Bemerkungen zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene und zu Autoren in ihrem Umfeld," *Νέα Πώμη* 6 (2009): 305–36.

29 *Epistle* 57 Leone and *Histories* 9.264.273–90, p. 349 Leone.

30 On Eirene and her patronage see E. Jeffreys, "The Sebastokratorissa Eirene as a Patron," in *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. M. Grünbart, M. Mullett, and L. Theis (Vienna, 2012 = *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 60), 177–94. On the controversial relationship with Bertha-Eirene and the compositional story of the *Allegories* see also A. Rhoby, "Ioannes Tzetzes als Auftragsdichter," *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 15 (2010): 155–70, here 160–64.

31 Sheer quantity, so it seems, was indeed a requirement for poetry commissioned by the elite circles of the capital. When Tzetzes found in Constantine Kotertzes a new, more generous patron for his *Allegories*, the number of lines produced for each Homeric book increased dramatically (Rhoby, "Ioannes Tzetzes als Auftragsdichter," 165). On the mutual and creative relationship between patrons and authors see M. Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople," in *Letters, Literacy and Literature in Byzantium* (Aldershot, 2007, vol. 8, originally in *The Byzantine Aristocracy: IX to XIII Century*, ed. M. Angold [Oxford, 1984], 173–201).

25 See Cullhed, "Eustathios of Thessalonike," 10*. On John Doukas Kamateros see D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography* (London, 1968), 127–30 (99. Ioannes Doukas), with discussion in A. P. Kazhdan, "John Doukas: An Attempt of De-Identification," *Le parole e le idee* 43–44 (1969): 242–45 and P. Karlin-Hayter, "99: Jean Doukas," *Byzantion* 42 (1972): 259–65. On the Kamateroi as a family see also G. Stadtmüller, "Zur Geschichte der Familie Kamateros," *BZ* 34 (1934): 352–58.

26 On the ambiguity of the term περιττός see Bernard, *The Ethics of Authorship*, 49–50.

How to Feed the Avid Reader?

Λίχνοι is not the only term with which Eustathios describes Homer's impatient reader. Other qualifications labeling the poet's audience are φιλοπευθεῖς,³² γλιχόμενοι,³³ φιλακροάμονες,³⁴ or even φιλομαθεῖς.³⁵ These terms are fairly consistently associated with the notion of readerly pleasure and delight. In this context they describe a desire that is not only zeal for learning, but has more to do with "narrative eagerness."³⁶ Curiosity is integral to the narrative pact between Homer and his proactive and avid reader. Characteristically, Homer's ability to please his greedy audience is conceptualized through the alimentary metaphor. A telling example is to be found in the comment on *Iliad* 2.394–97 (comparison between the Greeks and the waves of the sea) and XIII 471–75 (comparison between Idomeneus and a wild boar). In both cases Eustathios refers to an otherwise unknown anecdote staging the culinary abilities of Alexander the Great's cook:³⁷

Πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ὕλης τεχνάσεται τοιαύτας τινὰς παραβολὰς, ποικίλος ὢν τοῖς φιλακροάμοσι δαιταλεὺς καὶ κατὰ τὸν θρυλλούμενον τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου δειπνοκλήτορα ἐξ ἑνὸς τινος εἶδους πολλὰ τεχνώμενος ἐδεστά.

In what follows too he often skillfully creates such comparisons out of the same subject matter, an ever-changing chef to the lovers of learning, skillfully preparing many dishes out

of a single sort of food, following the example of Alexander's renowned cook.

Καὶ ὅρα ὡς πολλάκις χρησάμενος τῇ ἀπὸ συδὸς παραβολῇ ὁ ποιητὴς αἰεὶ εὐπορεῖ ἑτεροτρόπου φράσεως, ποικίλην καὶ αὐτὸς πανδαισίαν τοῖς φιλομαθέσιν ἐξ ἑνὸς ζώου τούτου δαιτρεύων, καὶ ἐκπλήττων κατὰ τὸν ἱστορούμενον φίλον δειπνοκλήτορα ἐπὶ τοῦ μεγάλου Ἀλεξάνδρου, ὃς ἐκ τοιοῦτου ζώου πολλὰ παραθεῖς τῷ βασιλεῖ καρκεύματα τότε δεξιὸς ἔδοξε.³⁸

And see how the poet is always lavish in showing a novel diction, even though he uses the comparison based on the wild boar quite often. He cuts up for those eager to learn a diversified and complete banquet, out of this one animal, thus amazing [the spectators] just like the dear cook serving Alexander the Great: the story goes that he proved his ability by preparing many different dishes based precisely on this animal.

These passages show clearly that the gluttonous listeners are easily fed by palatable and superficial variation. Homer often regales this kind of audience with the same food, while providing an impression of diversity and variety, which admittedly also facilitates learning. Comparisons in themselves, after all, are described as a mere dressing, a sort of surface addition to the core of the text.³⁹

We have seen that abundance of descriptions and novelty or variation are two desiderata of the gluttonous audience.⁴⁰ The λίχνοι, however, are also caught between the need to be briefed with as many details

32 *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:179.21 (anticipation and pleasure).

33 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:148.2–3 (anticipation and pleasure, see below); p. 624.30–33 (desire) Van der Valk.

34 See below.

35 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:395.12–14; 3:258.5–7. The use of φιλομαθεῖς to describe a refined audience looking for (ekphrastic) digressions is not exceptional. An enlightening parallel can be found, for instance, in Evagrius's *Ecclesiastical History*, where a digression on the architectural amenities of Antioch (1.18) is commented as follows: Ταῦτα, εἰ καὶ πάρεργα, τοῖς φιλομαθέσιν οὐκ ἄκομψα ("Though secondary, these details are not irrelevant for those eager to know"). See B. Croke, "Uncovering Byzantium's Historiographical Audience," in *History as Literature*, ed. R. Macrides (Farnham, 2010), 25–53, here 31.

36 Eustathios develops here a motif found also in the scholia: see Nünlist, *Ancient Critic*, 135–36.

37 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:372.15–18.

38 *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:501.32–502.5.

39 Cf. *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:937.27; 4:621.18.

40 In general, pleasing entertainment (ψυχαγωγία: cf. for instance *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:179.21 Van der Valk; *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:262.16 Stallbaum) is provided by a style of "breaking" the storyline. Ἀκολουθία, that is to say the logical sequence of the tale (e.g. *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:34.14–16; 3:775.31–776.6; 4:605.13–14: on the term, drawn from the vocabulary of logic, see Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii*, 2: LXXV) or else its natural course (φυσικὴ εἰσβολή: *Commentary on the Iliad* 2:266.15–16) is interrupted by anticipations (e.g. *Commentary on the Iliad* 4:3.19–22, where the greedy reader is mentioned again), digressions (see Van der Valk's elucidation in *Eustathii Commentarii*, vol. 2, XXXIV–XXXVI) and flashbacks, as we have seen (cf. also *Commentary on the Iliad* 2:163.8–10 Van der Valk).

as possible on the story, hence bothered by the incipit *in medias res*, and the urge to rush to the end of the story, hence tormented by any excess of suspense.⁴¹ Their impatience is therefore relieved by flashbacks, as we have seen above, but also by flash-forwards. This is made clear, for instance, in the comment on *Iliad* 1.241–42 (foreshadowing Achilles' death), where anticipation is singled out as a means to delight the desiring listener:⁴²

“Ὅτι πολλάκις ὁ ποιητὴς ἐν βραχεὶ προεκτίθεται τὰ ἐς ὕστερον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ εἰς πλάτος λεχθησόμενα ψυχαγωγῶν οὕτω τοὺς ἀκροατὰς γλιχομένους ἐκεῖνα προμαθεῖν. Καὶ καλεῖται τὸ τοιοῦτον σχῆμα προαναφώνησις.

Note that the poet often sets out very briefly the events he will enlarge upon later in the story, thus pleasing the hearers striving to know those details in advance; such a figure is called anticipation.

Here again we have a listener who, unable to follow the natural narrative flow, jumps forward eager to find out the story's final outcome. The poet meets this need by interrupting the story line. He makes the plot as desultory as his audience's desires. He thus ends up managing the greedy reader precisely thanks to the nonlinear arrangement of the text that seemed at first utterly annoying. Ultimately, Homer's ability lies in keeping the reader suspended between excess and lack of information. Such a goal is achieved through distinctive narrative techniques, but also, as we shall see, through specific hermeneutical practices.

From a narrative point of view, rhetorical *διασκευή* plays a crucial role in complicating and expanding the plot.⁴³ Equally important to our concerns, expansion

adds to the emotional involvement sustaining Homer's narrative ploy. Thanks to the plot's *διασκευή*, the poet leads his readers through an emotional journey, rationing drama and *coups de théâtre*. The trick lies in keeping the right narrative tension, relieving the readers when necessary and fulfilling their desires and expectations. Contrast and relief are crucial to readerly pleasure, as conceptualized by Eustathios.⁴⁴ The more or less linear arrangement of the plot, as well as the presence or absence of digressions and descriptions, has a deep impact on the narrative pace and can be effectively used to relieve or excite the reader and raise or lower his attention. Following in the footsteps of the Hellenistic scholia, Eustathios presents expansion—in the form of thickly descriptive passages—as a useful means to both relax the listener and make him alert.⁴⁵ Sometimes a plainer and more linear narrative is what is needed to calm the reader, especially after the excitement provided by engaging episodes such as the battle scenes. This is when rhetorical expansion livens up an otherwise dull matter:⁴⁶

“Ὅτι τὸν ἄγριον αἰχμητὴν Ἑκτορα τῆς μάχης ἀποστήσας, ὡς καὶ πρὸ βραχέων ἐρρέθη, ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ οὕτω μονάσας καὶ θείου τούτου προσώπου τὴν φύλοπιν ἀνίησι τὸ τοῦ πολέμου ἀκμαῖον καὶ ἀναπαύει τὸν ἀκροατὴν μεταπεσὼν ἐκ τῶν ἐναγωνίων εἰς γλυκύτητα ἱστορικῆς ὑπτιάσεως, καὶ τὸν Λύκιον Γλαῦκον εὐρὼν λαβὴν λόγου καὶ αὐτὸν ἐπεισοδιάσας πολλὰ δι’ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια τῇ ποιήσει παρεμβάλλει οἷον μύθους, ἐξ ὧν τὸ τῆς ἀλληγορίας ἀνακύπτει καλόν, ἱστορίας, γενεαλογίας, γνωμολογίας, ἔθη παλαιὰ καὶ ἄλλα οὐκ ὀλίγα, δι’ ὧν τό τε μονοειδὲς τῆς γραφῆς ἐξαιρεῖ τῆς ποιήσεως καὶ πολυμαθῆ ποιεῖ τὸν ἀκροατὴν.

Note that, after taking away the fierce warrior Hektor from the battle, as we said a little while ago, the poet, who removed also this divine character from the battle, loosens the tension of

41 Nünlist highlights a similar dynamic in the scholia in “Some Ancient Views.” This is also a distinctive feature of novelistic writing and reading. See J. R. Morgan, “A Sense of the Ending: The Conclusion of Heliodoros' *Aethiopica*,” *TAPA* 119 (1989): 299–320 and especially 299.

42 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:148.1–4.

43 See *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:7.6–12 Van der Valk; *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:2.22 Stallbaum, p. 8, 17 Cullhed. *Διασκευή* also sustains the text's *ποικιλία*, on which see Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii*, vol. 2, LIII–LIV, LVI–LVII and Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 257, n. 18. On *διασκευή* in Eustathios see A. Pizzone, “Lady

Phantasia's 'Epic' Scrolls and Fictional Creativity in Eustathios' Commentaries on Homer,” *MEG* 14 (2014): 177–97.

44 See for instance *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:759.10–11; 3:771.10; 4:432.22 Van der Valk.

45 *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:306.7–17 Van der Valk. On this topic in the scholia see Nünlist, *Ancient Critic*, 137–53.

46 *Commentary on the Iliad* 2:256.9–257.4.

the war and relaxes the hearer by transitioning from the agony of the fight to the sweetness of a detailed historical exposition, and taking inspiration from Glaukos the Lycian, he introduces him, inserting many marvels such as myths—from which the beauty of allegory crops out—stories, genealogies, *gnomai*, ancient traditions and a variety of other things, thanks to which he gets rid of monotony in his writing, and instructs the reader in many ways.

Homer moves on a thin line between tension and relaxation. He cannot keep the listener in a continuous state of excitement; yet, even when the pace necessarily slows down, diversions are indispensable, lest the audience's attention slip away. Furthermore, the passage shows how hermeneutics can also be a form of narrative complication and expansion. When the narrative comes closer to history-writing than to story-telling,⁴⁷ interest can be aroused in the audience through a text that stimulates more subtle interpretations. Interestingly, allegory seems to have the same entertaining power as rhetorical expansion.⁴⁸ Both complicate and, in a way, support the text: the former by highlighting hidden layers of meaning, the latter by reorganizing the story line. The reader can thus be kept engaged even when the narrative is too linear or the material at hand is not rich enough. The analogy emerges quite clearly when we compare the passage above with Eustathios's comment on book 2 of the *Iliad* and its narrative structure:⁴⁹

Ἰστέον δὲ ὅτι, ἐπεὶ ὑπτιον τὸ τῆς Ὀμηρικῆς Βοιωτίας βιβλίον, ἔτι δὲ καὶ γλίσχρον, οὗ μόνος οὗτος σκοπὸς ἀρχοῦς νηῶν ἐρεῖν νῆας τε προπάσας, παρεμπλέκει καὶ μύθους καὶ ἱστορίας καὶ ἐπαίνους καὶ ἕτερα ὁ ποιητῆς δι' ὧν καὶ τὸ

μονοειδὲς ἐξαιρεῖ τῆς ἀφηγηματικῆς πραγματείας καὶ πλατύνει τὸ ὀλιγόϋλον καὶ τὴν ὑπτιότητα τοῦ λόγου μεταποιεῖ πρὸς γοργότητα.

One must know that, since the book of the Homeric Boeotia is flat and moreover poor as to the subject matter (its only aim is to list the commanders and all their ships), the poet interweaves myths and stories and encomia and other ingredients: thanks to these devices he removes uniformity from the material of the narrative and broadens the paucity of the subject matter, turning tedium into swiftness.

Iliad book 2 represents the quintessential example of Homeric expansion, turning a linear, monotonous narrative into a polycentric, entertaining one. As the passage above points out, the presence of a single, simple σκοπός is not enough to keep the curious listeners engaged: they immediately jump somewhere else. The detours that complicate the book and interrupt the catalogue are motivated by the desire of the poet or the audience to abandon the main narrative and to turn to other, equally interesting episodes:⁵⁰

ἢ καὶ ἄλλως ποιεῖ τοῦτο, ὅτε ἡ μὲν ἀκολουθία τῶν ἐξῆς ἐθέλει ἔχεσθαι, ὁ δὲ ποιητῆς ἢ ὁ φιλομαθὴς ἀκροατῆς ἐπ' ἄλλο γλίσχεται τι τραπῆναι τὸν λόγον, μέγα δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ καὶ ἱστορίας ἄξιον.

He also does it when the logical sequence of the events should be maintained but the poet or else the listener zealous for learning, desires that the narrative turns to another topic that is equally grand and worth being narrated.

Strikingly, Homer's authorial intention and the expectations of his proactive audience are put here on the same level. Both are extratextual agents, controlling the story and shaping its structure. The "curious listeners" dictate the narrative agenda and crave variety.

The taste for a polycentric, digressive narrative, accumulating meticulous and detailed descriptions but also allowing for allegorical interpretations, is in tune with the evolution of contemporary rhetorical genres,

47 Expansion and digression are perceived as conflicting with history writing as early as Polybius. In *Histories* 3.57.5–9 Polybius equates the reader eager to be distracted by digressions with a gluttonous guest at a banquet (τοῖς λίχνους τῶν δειπνητῶν), unable to focus on the present and therefore ultimately unable to enjoy the food he is presented with. On "history" as construed by Eustathios in his commentaries see Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 230.

48 On allegory in Eustathios's commentaries see again Cullhed, "Eustathios of Thessalonike," 59*–73*, with a survey of earlier bibliography.

49 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:416.21–25 Van der Valk.

50 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:345.11–14 Van der Valk.

including fiction.⁵¹ Eustathios's detailed analysis of the poems' narrative mechanisms shows that Homeric poetry was conceptualized in very similar terms.

Finally, and most importantly, the idea of active intervention on the part of the listeners fits well with the performative character of much of twelfth-century literature. Just like Homer, Eustathios's students must be prepared to adapt their production to the requests of their voracious listeners or commissioners. From the perspective of the relationship between commissioner and writer, the description and categorization of readerly pleasure is crucial. Through Homer, Eustathios can show his students what aesthetic and emotional issues are at stake, and teach them how to control and direct them. In the next section I will explore how Eustathios describes and conceptualizes the pleasure of the gluttonous reader.

A Tickling Pleasure

As anticipated above, relief plays an important part in the audience's emotional response to the Homeric text. Following the Hellenistic scholia, Eustathios often underlines the importance of ἀναπαύειν to the audience, and especially the gluttonous readers.⁵² Unlike the scholia, however, Eustathios describes this relief—and the tension preceding it—in physical and at times ambiguous terms. A good example is the following

51 On the structure of the Komnenian novels see P. A. Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric, and 'Drama' Rediscovered: Scholars and Poets in Byzantium Interpret Heliodorus," in *Studies in Heliodorus* (Cambridge, 1998), 125–56, and later P. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel* (Cambridge, MA, 2005), chapter 2 (accessed on line: <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5763>). Further details can be found in E. Jeffreys's analysis in *Four Byzantine Novels* (Liverpool, 2012), 171–72. As for the performative aspect of the novels, affecting also their structure, see P. A. Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting," 151–52.

52 For ἀναπαύειν in the scholia see Nünlist, *Ancient Critic*, 151. The same qualities are ascribed in Byzantium also to fictional narrative. According to Psellos, for instance, the plot of *Charikleia* is so effective on the readers because it knows how both to "feed" them with brisk ups and downs and to relieve them at the right moment. The reader's psychological needs are constantly taken into account (94.61–62 Dyck): φροντίζει δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἐντυγχάνοντος αὐτῷ, ἀναπαῦον μεταβολαῖς καὶ καινολογίαις καὶ ἐπεισοδίοις καὶ ποικίλαις περιτροπαῖς ("The book takes thought for its reader by relieving him with its variety and by the novelty of its diction, by episodes and various turns of [events]" [trans. A.R. Dyck]).

passage, related again to anticipation (comment on *Iliad* 17.201: Zeus announcing Hektor's future death):⁵³

Ὅτι προαναφώνησιν πάλιν συνήθως τῶν ἐφεξῆς ὁ ποιητὴς ἐκτιθέμενος τῷ εἴτε λίχνῳ τὴν ἀκοὴν εἴτε φιλέλληνι ἀκροατῇ παθαίνομένῳ, οἷα εἰκός. Ἐφ' οἷς Ἔκτωρ τὰ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ἄμβροτα τεύχεα ἔδυνε, πλάττει τὸν Δία λέγοντα οὕτως "ἂ δειλ', οἰδέ τί τοι . . . θάνατος καταθύμι' ἐστίν."

Note that the poet again sets out an anticipation of the events to come, for the sake of the gluttonous listener or else of the philhellenic listener, who, as expected, shows anguish. Thus, after describing Hektor clothing himself in the immortal armor of Achilles, he imagines Zeus saying "Ah, poor wretch, death verily is not in your thoughts."

A verb describing unrestrained and often feminine manifestations of sorrow,⁵⁴ παθαίνομαι denotes here a strong emotional involvement on the part of the reader. Throughout the poems such involvement is both triggered by sympathetic identification with the characters and stimulated by Homer's stylistic choices.⁵⁵ Since it refers to external behavior, παθαίνομαι may suggest again that the poet is induced to change the course of the narrative by his listener's immediate and perceivable reaction.

Quite distinctively, Eustathios characterizes the pleasure provided by the narrative fictional parts of the poem, and by their poetic arrangement, as a provocative and inviting "tickling." The text touches, provokes, and lures the reader, as emerges from Eustathios's commentary on the Sirens' song, envisaged as a metapoetic representation of Homer's own poetry:⁵⁶

53 *Commentary on the Iliad* 4:37.19–38.2.

54 Cf. *Commentary on the Iliad* 2:357.4–5 Van der Valk; *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:175.37; Anna Komnene, *Alexiad* 1.12.3.2; Nikephoros Basilakes, *Progymnasmata* 41.186, p. 178 Pignani (the grief of Mary). On rhetoric and "femininity" see E. Papaioannou, "Michael Psellos's Rhetorical Gender," *BMGS* 24 (2000): 133–46.

55 See *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:506.5–11 (Protesilaos's death); 3:933.16–18 Van der Valk (related again to the relief that anticipation provided for the philhellenic reader). On Homer's use of the middle-passive, see *Commentaries on the Iliad* 1:799.4 Van der Valk.

56 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:4.22–23 Stallbaum.

“Ἴσμεν γάρ φησι πάντα ὅσα ἐν Τροίᾳ Ἀργεῖοί τε Τρώες τε μόγησαν. Ταῦτα ὁ ἐξῆστοριῶν γάργαλος τῆς ἀκοῆς καὶ ὁ ἐκ μυθικῶν καὶ λοιπῆς ποιητικῆς διοικήσεως.

“We know,” they say, “all that the Greeks and the Trojans suffered at Troy.” These are the tickling of the ear through stories, myths, and the rest of the poetic organization.

The same “tickling” effect is achieved also through sound figures⁵⁷ or, again, through contrasts that bring about relaxation in the reader:⁵⁸

“Ὅτι ὡς ἐν ἡθοποιῆας λόγῳ πλάττει ὁ ποιητὴς τὸν Ἑκτορα λέγοντά τινα ἐπὶ τῷ Πατρόκλῳ κειμένῳ, ἐμβριθῶς μέντοι. καὶ οὐδέν τι σαρκαστικὸν ὅλως ἢ ἀστεῖον ὁ ἥρωες λαλεῖ καὶ οἷον γαργαλίσαι καὶ διαχεῖαι ἀκροατήν, ὡς εἶχον ἄλλαι τινὲς πρὸ ταύτης ἡθοποιῆαι Ὀμηρικαί.

Note that the poet, as in a discourse of the character, imagines Hektor speaking to the deceased Patroklos, indeed pressing him hard. And the hero does not say anything sarcastic or witty and of the sort that tickles and relaxes the listener, as it happens in some of the other preceding Homeric character-monologues.

Although the word family associated with γαργαλίζω (γάργαλος, γαργαλισμός, etc.) may be used to praise rhetorical refinement and its impact on the audience, these terms have also negative overtones, especially in literary criticism and Christian literature.⁵⁹

57 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:528.1–2 Van der Valk. In general the notion of tickling is closely linked to rhetorical refinement. The funeral oration written by Euthymios Tornikes for Euthymios Malakes offers a good case in point (2.6, p. 80.20–21 Darrouzès). Euthymios’s passage is all the more significant as he deals explicitly with the pleasure triggered by reading. Tornikes, full of desire (2.5, p. 79.16–18 Darrouzès), had copied a volume containing Malakes’ letters and discourses (lost after the crusaders took Constantinople: 2.6, p. 80.5–7 Darrouzès). It is interesting to note that for Tornikes, reading is a very physical and emotional activity, one that is also bidirectional: indeed, he talks to the book as if it were able to respond to him (2.6, p. 80.12 Darrouzès).

58 *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:938.16–20 Van der Valk.

59 See L. Graverini, *Literature and Identity in the Metamorphoses of Apuleius* (Columbus, 2012), 28–29.

They describe the cheap effects of sophistic rhetoric, seducing the hearer rather than straightforwardly instructing him. In this respect, γαργαλίζω seems a perfect match for the λίχνοι and their gluttonous behavior.

In the passage listing the effects of Homeric ἡθοποιῆαι, γαργαλίζω is significantly associated with διαχεῖσθαι, a verb often used in the *Commentaries* to describe the pleasure deriving from resolved tension, dramatic or sarcastic irony, or even sound figures.⁶⁰ Like λίχνος and γαργαλίζω, διαχεῖσθαι conveys the idea of superficial pleasure.⁶¹ The association of psychic διάχυσις with joy goes back as far as Plato and was later developed especially in Stoicism. Stoic philosophers explicitly connected the expansion of the soul with the psychology of affective episodes.⁶² In early Christian thought, διάχυσις was associated with the visual and guilty pleasure elicited by theatrical performances.⁶³ Linked with notions of “warmth” and “hydraulic expansion,”⁶⁴ διαχεῖσθαι points again to a readerly response that borders on bodily symptoms, and epitomizes the dynamic of meagerness and excess that Eustathios regarded as the key to the poems’ success.⁶⁵

Eustathios, however, is not the first to use the verb in connection with reading practices: it is found in one of the most iconic reading scenes of ancient literature. I refer here to Heliodoros’s *Ethiopic Tales*, a favorite of Byzantine readers.⁶⁶ The novel’s climactic moment depicts the Egyptian priest Kalasiris—Heliodoros’s

60 See *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:777.13–17 (resolved tension and sound figures); 4:704.10 (sound figures); 815.3–7 Van der Valk (contrast); *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:400.26 Stallbaum (irony).

61 See *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:304.6.

62 Plato, *Cratylus* 419C–D and SVF 1:209, 3:400, 3:463. On διάχυσις and Stoicism see D. Sedley, “Chrysippus on Psychophysical Causality,” in *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind*, ed. J. Brunschwig and M. Craven Nussbaum (Cambridge, 1993), 329–30; R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford, 2000), 30, 40; R. W. Sharples, *Peripatetic Philosophy, 200 BC to AD 200: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation* (Cambridge, 2010), 148.

63 See R. Webb, *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2008), 204 on John Chrysostom.

64 Cf. *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:410.25 Van der Valk.

65 See *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:400.37–38 Stallbaum. According to Plutarch, *Tyrrwhitt’s Fragments* 1.6, διάχυσις is a symptom of the soul that manifests itself in the body. Later on, Plotinus insists that expansion affects the body alone: *Enneads* 3.6.3.

66 See H. Gärtner, “Charikleia in Byzanz,” *AA* 15 (1969): 47–69.

doppelgänger—reading a miniature version of the main narrative. The story of Charikleia, unfolding the reason for the girl’s whiteness in spite of having black parents, is inscribed on an embroidered swathe, which is in turn read and decoded by Kalasiris. His psychological reactions to the shocking revelation are described in detail. Needless to say, in Heliodoros’s scene Kalasiris is the internal reader, serving as a model for the external reader of the novel:⁶⁷

Ταῦτα, ὦ Κνήμων, ὡς ἀνέγνων, ἐγνώριζον μὲν καὶ τὴν ἐκ θεῶν οἰκονομίαν ἐθαύμαζον ἡδονῆς δὲ ἅμα καὶ λύπης ἐνεπλήσθην καὶ πάθος τι καινότερον ὑπέστην ὁμοῦ δακρύων καὶ χαίρων, διαχεομένης μὲν τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀγνοουμένων εὔρεσιν καὶ τῶν χρησθέντων ἤδη τὴν ἐπίλυσιν, ἀδημονούσης δὲ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἐσομένων ἔκβασιν, καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον οἰκτειρούσης ὡς ἄστατόν τι καὶ ἀβέβαιον καὶ ἄλλοτε πρὸς ἄλλα τρεπόμενον τότε δὲ ὑπερβαλλόντως ἐν ταῖς Χαρικλείας τύχαις γνωριζόμενον. Εἰσῆει γάρ με πολλῶν ἔννοια, τίνων μὲν γενομένη τίνων ἐνομισθὴ πόσω δὲ τῷ μεταξὺ τῆς ἐνεγκούσης ἀπήχθη, κεκλήρωτο δὲ θυγατρὸς ὄνομα νόθον ἀποβαλοῦσα τὸ γνήσιον Αἰθιοπῶν καὶ βασιλεῖον γένος.

When I had read these words, Cnemon, I recognized and admired the wise dispensation of the gods. Filled with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain, I went through the singular experience of weeping and rejoicing at the same moment. My soul felt relaxed by the discovery of the unknown facts and the conclusive explanation of the oracle; but it was greatly harassed with thoughts of what result the future might bring, and stirred with pity for the instability and infirmity of human life, swayed now towards one thing and now towards

another—as was then supremely evidenced in the fortunes of Charicleia. My mind was beset by many reflections: what an origin was hers, and with what parentage she had been credited! How great a distance had she been brought from her native land, she to whom Destiny had allotted a spurious daughterhood after being deprived of her genuine one in Ethiopia and in the royal house! (trans. J. Morgan)

The relief mixed with excitement that Kalasiris experiences on reading the swathe is precisely the kind of emotional, empathetic reaction repeatedly stressed by Eustathios in his commentaries. Moreover, the awareness the reader gains from Kalasiris’s hermeneutical activity adds to the narrative pleasure, as from this point on the reader is better informed than the main characters. Such a gap between the audience’s and the characters’ awareness is often pointed out also by Eustathios as a means by which Homer hooks and entices his listeners.⁶⁸ Finally, in Heliodoros’s story, the swathe comes in as a sort of anticipation, or προαναφώνησις, a foreshadowing of the future happy ending, when the truth will be disclosed to everyone. It is a guarantee that the reader’s hope will be fulfilled, even though the situation may at times appear desperate.⁶⁹ Such a basic commitment shapes and affects the reader’s emotional involvement. And again, if we look at the commentaries, Eustathios, following the tradition of the scholia, often states that anticipation reinforces the alliance, or better the promise (ὑπόσχεσις; a term significantly

68 E.g., *Commentary on the Odyssey* 3:348.16–22 Stallbaum.

69 After all, in the ancient erotic novels (and in their Komnenian counterparts) the most crucial anticipation is the inevitable happy outcome. Cf. M. Fusillo, “How Novels End: Some Patterns of Closure in Hellenistic Narrative,” in *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*, ed. D. Roberts, F. Dunn, and D. Fowler (Princeton, 1997), 3–22; I. Repath, “Achilles Tatius’ Leucippe and Cleitophon: What Happened Next?” *CQ* 55, no. 1 (2005): 250–65; S. Montiglio, “‘His eyes stood as though of horn or steel’: Odysseus’ Fortitude and Moral Ideals in the Greek Novels,” in *The Construction of the Real and the Ideal in the Ancient Novel*, ed. M. Paschalis and S. Panayotakis (Groningen, 2013), 148–50, including a comparison between Heliodoros’s novel and the *Odyssey*’s teleological optimism. We should also remember that Psellos stresses that the novel at first disconcerts the reader, providing too much information at the beginning, just like Homer. (On Psellos’s subtle narratological assessment of Heliodoros’s technique, see C. A. McLaren, “A Twist of Plot: Psellos, Heliodorus and Narratology,” in *Reading Michael Psellos*, ed. C. Barber and D. Jenkins [Leiden, 2006], 73–93.)

67 Heliodoros, *Charikleia* 9.4.1–3. On this much-studied passage see above all J. R. Morgan, “Readers and Audiences in the ‘Aithiopika’ of Heliodorus,” in *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel IV*, ed. H. Hofmann (Groningen, 1991), 85–103; T. Whitmarsh, “The Birth of a Prodigy: Heliodorus and the Genealogy of Hellenism,” in *Studies in Heliodorus*, ed. R. Hunter (Cambridge, 1998), 93–124; R. Hunter, “The Aithiopika of Heliodorus: Beyond Interpretation?” in *On Coming After: Studies in Post-Classical Greek Literature and Its Reception*, vol. 2, *Comedy and Performance: Greek Poetry of the Roman Empire* (Berlin, 2008), 805–28.

used by both Eustathios and Tzetzes⁷⁰), between reader and storyteller.

As we have seen, Eustathios shows a distinct awareness of both Homer's narrative mechanisms and inventions and the pleasure they produce. At the same time, however, he proves equally aware of the ethical tensions inherent in such mechanisms. On one hand he emphasizes the narrative construction of the poems by using terms such as πλάσμα, πλάσις, μῦθος, and πλοκή.⁷¹ On the other, when he first addresses the notions of διασκευή and myth in the *Commentary on the Odyssey*, he presents them in an ambivalent light:⁷²

Καὶ τοῖς θρυλλουμένοις ἀληθέσι, προστίθησιν
τι καὶ τῶν οὐκ ἀληθῶν. Ἐκὼν ἑαυτῷ ἐνιστῶν
τὴν τοῦ ἀδυνάτου γραφήν. Καὶ οὐ πάντα πρὸς
πλάσμα διασκευάζει καὶ μύθους, ἀλλὰ κατ' αὐτὸν
φάναι, πολλὰ ψεύδεα λέγει ἐτύμοις ὁμοῖα, ὅθεν
ἂν τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο. Πολλὰ μέντοι καὶ οὐ πάντα
ψεύδεται. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἔτι ἐτύμως ὁμοῖα ἢ ποιήσις
φθέγγοιτο ἂν ψευδῇ πάντα εἰη συνείρουσα.

And [he] adds to the traditional truths some measure of the non-true, willingly opening himself to the charge of claiming the impossible. Moreover, all of his elaborations do not serve to add fabrications and myths, but rather—to say it in his own words—he tells “many lies that seems to be true” (Od. 19.203, the “Cretan” Odysseus), “so that nobody can test them” (11.366). Indeed, he lies in “many” and not in all instances, since the poem would no longer be speaking of things “that seem to be true” if it were but a string of lies. (trans. E. Cullhed)

The sentence in which Eustathios presents Homer's turn to fiction—ἐκὼν ἑαυτῷ ἐνιστῶν τὴν τοῦ ἀδυνάτου

γραφὴν—is tinged with a legal shade, suggesting that such an aesthetic choice could easily be censured. The same goes for the pleasure elicited by mythical inventions.

In his recent exploration of Psellos's “aesthetic of reading,” Stratis Papaioannou has shown that readerly pleasure is often described in sensual terms.⁷³ Psellos, he says, “prioritizes” readerly delight.⁷⁴ Some of these elements are present also in Eustathios. There is a major difference, though: Eustathios does not identify with this kind of readerly engagement, nor does he explicitly advocate it. On one hand, he takes the pleasure prompted by pagan inventions as a well-acknowledged fact; on the other, however, he tends to depict it as a sort of guilty pleasure. Not only are the terms describing the hearers' delight ambiguous, as we have seen; what is more, in the *Prologue* to the *Commentary on the Iliad* the usual alimentary metaphor suggests that the fascination exerted by the Homeric myths may conflict with social norms:⁷⁵

Ἔτι δὲ γίνεται καὶ μεθοδευτῆς οὕτω τῆς τῶν
μύθων πιθανῆς πλάσεως, ἵνα καὶ τούτου τοῖς
φίλομαθέσιν, ὡς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν εἰδῶν τοῦ λόγου,
καθηγήσῃται. Ἐκεῖνο δὲ καὶ μάλιστα θαυμαστὸν
ἐν τούτοις Ὅμηρος ἔχει, ὅτι καὶ μύθοις μεμεστω-
μένος ὅμως οὐ φεύγεται, ἀλλὰ στέργεται, καὶ οἱ
μισεῖν αὐτὸν προῖσχύμενοι οὐκ ὀκνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ
ἄλλως ἅπτεσθαι, καὶ ἀποδιοπομπούντες αὐθις
προσίενται, ὅμοιοι τῷ παροιμιακῷ Σκύθῃ, ὃς
θεωμένων μὲν Ἑλλήνων ἀπέσχετο ἵππου εὐγενοῦς
ἐκπεπνευκότος, ἀνακάμψας δὲ καθ' ἡσυχίαν τὸ
σύνθηρες ἔπραττεν, ἀπολαύων οὐ ᾗθελεν.

And he is also a master of method as to the credible fabrication of myths so as to instruct in this genre those who are eager to learn, as he does with all the other genres of discourse. In this respect the most admirable trait of Homer is that he is not avoided, but cherished, although he is full of myths. Even those who loudly claim to hate him do not shrink from touching him otherwise and they may leave, but they always

70 Cf. *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:29.26 Van der Valk and *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:50.26–30; Tzetzes, *Scholia in Hesiod's Works and Days* 106bis, p. 91.6 Gaisford. On the term ὑπόσχεσις see Van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii*, vol. 1, p. XCV, n. 10, with Nünlist, *Ancient Critic*, 37–38 for the scholia and the idea of narrative commitment.

71 Δράμα is also included (*Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:213.22). For the terminology of Byzantine fiction see Agapitos, “Narrative, Rhetoric, and ‘Drama’ Rediscovered.”

72 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:1.9–12 Stallbaum (1.11–15 Cullhed).

73 S. Papaioannou, *Michael Psellos: Rhetoric and Authorship in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2013), 91–113.

74 *Michael Psellos*, 92.

75 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:2.25–32 Van der Valk.

come back; they are similar to the proverbial Scythian, who left behind his noble horse that had just passed away, as the Greeks were watching, but then, in due course, returned to follow his own custom in peace as he wished.

The reference to a stern, imaginary audience, censoring the consumption of scrumptious but forbidden food, along with the legal metaphor of the previous passage, points to the mixed feelings and the tensions still surrounding pagan content at the end of the twelfth century. As we have seen, Eustathios does not oppose the fascination exerted by mythological or literary creations; on the contrary he acknowledges their far-reaching power. But he identifies with different reading practices. The next section will explore such practices.

The Sagacious Reader

From time to time the *Commentaries* mention another type of audience, one that does not seem to have much in common with the *λίχνοι*. Eustathios refers to such readers and listeners as *συνετοί*, “intelligent” or “sagacious.”⁷⁶ As we shall see, this distinctive label was inspired by his reading of Pindar. The sagacious reader is characterized by a greater awareness of Homer’s rhetorical techniques. Readerly pleasure is still present, but it arises from an understanding of the narrative mechanisms deployed by Homer, rather than from emotional, sympathetic participation or identification with the characters in the poems. In other words, the readers who are *συνετοί* do not fall for Homer’s narrative tricks, even though they still appreciate their ingenuity. Pleasure lies in hermeneutics and in sharing the poet’s narrative awareness.

One of the best descriptions of this more skilled readership is found in Eustathios’s comment on a well-known metapoetic passage from the *Iliad*’s fourth book (4.539–43):⁷⁷

76 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:16, 16; 2:815, 8; 3:99, 15; 342.27; 4:938.25 Van der Valk; *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:122, 20 Stallbaum.

77 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:802.6–19. On the Iliadic passage see G. S. Kirk’s comment in *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 1: *Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), 397–99, and above all B. Graziosi, “The Poet in the *Iliad*,” in *The Author’s Voice in Classical and Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Marmodoro and J. Hill (Cambridge, 2013), 9–38, n. 51.

“Ὅτι εἰδὼς ὁ ποιητὴς τὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν ῥητορείᾳ ἰσχὺν καὶ οἷαν σήμερον μάχην ἐξαρτῶσει τῷ λόγῳ, καθ’ ἣν πολλοὶ πρηνέες ἐν κονίῃσι πεσοῦνται, καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι κάλλιον καὶ μεγαλοπρεπέστερον καὶ ἐναγωνιώτερον συστήναι μάχην ἢ ἀφηγηθῆναι, λέγει, ὅτι τότε “οὐκέτι ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὀνόσαιτο μετελθὼν, ὃς ἔτ’ ἀβλητος καὶ ἀνούτατος ὀξείῃ χαλκῷ δινεύει κατὰ μέσσον, ἄγοι δέ ἐ Παιλλὰς Ἀθῆνη χειρὸς ἐλοῦσα, ἀτὰρ βελέων ἀπερύκοι ἐρωήν.” τοιοῦτος δ’ ἂν εἴη θεατὴς ὁ τοῦ ποιητοῦ ἀκροατὴς, ὃς οὐ τῶν τοῦ πολέμου κακῶν μετέχει, ἀλλὰ τοῦ τῶν πολεμικῶν διηγῆσεων κατὰ νοῦν ἀπολαύει καλοῦ θεάματος, ἀκίνδυνος τὴν μάχην περιῶν καὶ μηδὲν τι ἔχων τῶν Ὀμηρικῶν ὀνόσασθαι, ἥτοι ἐκφαυλίσαι καὶ καταμέμψασθαι, καὶ μᾶλλον, εἴπερ ἄγοι αὐτὸν ἡ Ὀμηρικὴ Παιλλὰς, ἡ τοῦ γράφειν δηλαδὴ μεθοδικὴ δεινότης, ἡ τοῦ φρονεῖν μήτηρ κατὰ τοὺς παλαιούς, χειρὸς ἐλοῦσα τὰς πτύχας ἀνελιπτούσης τὰς τῆς Ὀμηρικῆς βίβλου καὶ οὕτω βελέων ἀπερύκουσα ἐρωήν. ὃν καὶ χειραγωγεῖ ἀκινδύνως ἡ τοιαύτη Παιλλὰς εἰς τὰ καθέκαστα τῆς Ὀμηρικῆς ποιήσεως οἷα συνετὸν ἀκροατὴν.

Note that the poet knows his own force in rhetoric and he knows what a battle his words are preparing today—many will fall face down in the dust. He also knows that taking part in a battle is not more beautiful, noble, or brave than reporting it, therefore he says “and now no man who waded into that work could ‘scorn’ it any longer, anyone still not speared or stabbed by tearing bronze who whirled into the heart of all that slaughter—not even if Great Athena led him by the hand, flicking away the weapons, hailing down against him” (4.539–43, trans. by Robert Fagles). The poet’s listener would make for such a spectator: I mean the one who does not partake in the evils of the war, but whose mind enjoys the beautiful spectacle of war tales, walking unharmed on the battlefield. In no way can he scorn Homer’s account, either by diminishing or blaming it, all the more so, should he be guided by Homer’s Pallas, that is the technical power of writing, the mother of thought according to the ancients. She would guide his hand as it turns the pages of the Homeric book, thus “flicking away the weapons,

hailing down against him.” Such an Athena leads him unharmed to explore Homeric poetry as befits an intelligent listener.

According to Eustathios's allegorical interpretation, those readers who, being *συνετοί*, master method, that is to say rhetoric, can look at Homeric poetry unaffected by its content.⁷⁸ Not only is the listener unarmed because he is not *physically present* on the battlefield, but more important for our concerns, he is not *touched psychologically* by the arrows darkening the sky above Troy. To such an audience aesthetic pleasure is purely intellectual and does not entail emotional participation. While enjoying the narration and appreciating the poet's rhetorical strategies, these readers are immune to the psychological effects that such strategies are meant to produce.

The hypothesis that the missiles featured in the comment on *Iliad* book 4 stand for the poet's narrative and rhetorical prowess is supported by Eustathios's prologue to the *Commentary on Pindar's Odes*.⁷⁹ Here the commentator builds on a well-known passage from *Olympic Ode* 2.84–90 where Pindar describes his odes as arrows never failing to hit the mark;⁸⁰ such arrows, moreover, speak only to the few who are able to understand (*συνετοῖσιν*) the poet, while the majority need interpreters to this end.⁸¹ Eustathios fittingly interprets *βέλεα* as Pindar's rhetorical skills, with a particular emphasis on variety, expansion, and digressions:⁸²

Ὦν ὑπέρκειται Πίνδαρος πολλὰ μέν, ὥς γε αὐτὸς ἂν εἴποι, βέλεα φωνεῦντα ὑπ' ἀγκῶνος φέρων, οὐδὲν δέ τι τῶν τόσων βελῶν εἰς μάτην ἐπαφίει

βαθὺς τὰς μεθόδους τῶν ῥητορειῶν, πόριμος ἐμπλατύνεσθαι τε καιρίως οἷς φράζει καὶ αὐθις ἀποστενοῦν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ λόγου ἰσχαίνων, ὅποι δέον ἐστί, καὶ τοῦτο πολυειδῶς.⁸³

And Pindar outdoes them, “carrying under his arm many speaking arrows,” as he would put it. He never flings any of his arrows in vain, for he deeply knows the techniques of rhetoric and he is able to expatiate on his diction in a timely way and then again to restrict the body of the discourse, holding it in check and this in varied forms.

Although Eustathios stresses quite clearly that lyric and epic poetry are very different in style,⁸⁴ in the *Commentaries on the Iliad* he uses again a direct citation of Pindar's *Olympic Ode* 2 to describe Homer's resourcefulness.⁸⁵ Therefore, a similar metaphorical interpretation for the missiles crossing the battlefield at the end of *Iliad* book 4 is not so unlikely.

The *συνετοί* share with the poet a common understanding of the narrative tools he deploys. Unlike the *λίχνοι*, such readers do not need a large amount of detail. On the contrary, they enjoy the poet's subtle allusions and can integrate the narrative with their own personal knowledge. So, for instance, a sagacious reader is led to wonder about the name of the Muse Homer calls upon at the beginning of the *Iliad*.⁸⁶

Πάντως δὲ καὶ ὁ ποιητὴς τὴν Καλλιόπην θέλων ἐπικαλέσασθαι οὐκ ἐκφωνεῖ αὐτήν, ἀλλὰ σεμνότερον ὀνόματι γενικῶ τῷ θεᾷ χρῆται καὶ

78 For the notion of allegorical metapoetics in connection with our passage see Cullhed, “Eustathios of Thessalonike,” 70–72.

79 See A. Kambylis, *Eustathios von Thessalonike, Prooimion zum Pindarkommentar* (Göttingen, 1991); M. Negri, *Eustazio di Tessalonica: Introduzione al commento a Pindaro* (Brescia, 2000).

80 On the image see Negri, *Eustazio di Tessalonica*, 176–200.

81 This is how Eustathios interprets the much-debated *Ol.* 2.85–86 φωνεῦντα συνετοῖσιν. ἐς δὲ τὸ πᾶν ἐρμηνεύων / χατίζει (*Prologue to the Commentary on Pindar* 10.1–2, p. 11.9–21 Kambylis). See A. Kambylis, *Eustathios über Pindars Epinikiendichtung: Ein Kapitel der klassischen Philologie in Byzanz* (Hamburg, 1991), 55–56. I will not address here the problem of modern exegesis.

82 *Prologue to the Commentary on Pindar* 3.1, p. 7.12–17 Kambylis. On audiences in Pindar see A. Morrison, *Performances and Audiences in Pindar's Sicilian Victory Odes* (London, 2007).

83 Eustathios views Pindar's practices through the lens of the cultural economy of his time. Undoubtedly Pindar, relying on a network of patrons and typically writing under commission, made an excellent model, easily adapted to Komnenian society. At 3.2, p. 8.2–6 Kambylis, Eustathios recalls how Pindar would produce more or fewer lines according to the generosity of his commissioners. This behavior reminds us of Tzetzes, whose production was directly proportional to the amount of money paid by his patrons (see n. 31 above).

84 *Prologue to the Commentary on Pindar* 2.1–3, pp. 6.13–7.10 Kambylis.

85 *Commentary on the Iliad* 4:506.21–25 Van der Valk.

86 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:16.14–17 Van der Valk. Admittedly, Eustathios's vocabulary is not always consistent throughout the commentaries. In his exegesis on the *Odyssey* he also comments on the same line, stating that the simpler listener will have questions about the Muse's name (1:3.18 Stallbaum, p. 12.16 Cullhed).

ἀφίησι ζητεῖν τὸν συνετὸν ἀκροατὴν, τίς ἂν εἴη αὕτη, ἐμφήνας μόνον, ὅτι Μοῦσαν καλεῖ. Μούσης γὰρ τὸ ἀείδειν.

Surely the poet, who wanted to call upon Kalliope, does not mention her, but uses instead the general name “goddess,” which is more solemn, and prompts the sagacious reader to investigate who she is, revealing only that she is called “Muse,” for singing belongs to the Muse.

Similarly, Homer does not waste too many words relating Odysseus’s voyage from the Phaeacian island back to Ithaca: the short six-verse summary is designed πρὸς ἀκροατὴν συνετόν.⁸⁷ Along the same lines, the sagacious reader admires the narrative arrangement of ἐκφράσεις and knows how to resolve ambiguities.⁸⁸ Subtleties in the diction appear to be explicitly intended for him.⁸⁹ Such a hermeneutical ability brings the συνετός closer to the exegete—that is, to Eustathios himself. The introduction to the commentary on Pindar further reinforces this view:⁹⁰

Καὶ ὡς ἀπρόσιτος μὲν καὶ θύρας ἐπιτεθειμένας ἔχων τοῖς, ὃ φασι, βεβήλοις τὰ ἐς ἀγροικίαν, τοῖς γε μὴν συνετοῖς ἀείδων χαρίεντα, οἱ τὸ λαβυρινθῶδες τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ φράσεως καὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀδιόδευτον ἀπευθύνουσι καὶ τὰς ἑλικας περιοδεύοντες ἕως καὶ ἐνδοτάτῳ εἴτ’ αὖθις ἀνελίττουσι καὶ οἴκοι κατ’ ἔμφρονα νοῦν ἀποκαθίστανται.

Also, he is unapproachable, as if his doors were shut, and his voice sounds rustic to those who are, as they say, uninitiated; whereas it sounds sweet to the wise listeners who can walk straight through the maze of his diction, inaccessible to most people, to those who go through the turns and twists, down to the innermost core of his song, and then are able to walk back again and come home safely in accordance with their sensible mind.

Eustathios uses here the same travel metaphor as in the introduction to his *Iliad* commentary.⁹¹ Since he is about to present a full exegesis of the *Odes*, it is quite clear that the commentator identifies with the συνετοί, traveling safely through the maze of Pindaric poetry.

We have seen that one of the main goals of Homer’s narrative and rhetorical techniques is to keep the λίχνοι emotionally hooked, achieving a balance between narrative tension and readers’ expectations. The συνετοί, on the contrary, engage with the text in a way that seems to exclude uncontrolled emotional involvement. This behavior emerges fairly clearly in the way the συνετός par excellence, that is to say Odysseus, reacts to the various tales embedded in the poem’s main narrative.⁹² Particularly striking, according to Eustathios, is the way in which Odysseus acts on the first song performed by Demodokos in *Odyssey* book 8, an erotic fiction in its own right, portraying the loves of Ares and Aphrodite. While the Phaeacians respond to the song like voracious listeners, delighted by the spicy content of the tale, Odysseus appears to be rather pleased by its artful character and refined linguistic texture. The comment on verse 8.367, describing the Phaeacians’ pleasure, runs as follows:⁹³

“Ὅτι Ὀδυσσεὺς τὰ κατὰ τὴν μοιχείαν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἀκούων ἐτέρπετο ἐν φρεσὶ καθὰ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι Φαίακες. Εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐχρῆν ἐπὶ οὕτῳ φανλοτάτῳ ἀκούσματος τὸν φιλόσοφον διαχέεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἔστιν εἰπεῖν ὡς οὐ τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀπλῶς χαίρει ἀλλὰ τῷ ῥυθμῷ καὶ τῇ ἐμμελείᾳ τοῦ σοφοῦ ᾠοῖδοῦ. Ἴσως δὲ καὶ ταῖς τοῦ μύθου ἀλληγορίαις ἐμβαθύνων φιλοσοφώτερον, καὶ οὐ κατὰ τοὺς Φαίακας ἀκροώμενος καὶ αὐτὸς, οἱ ἄλλως τέρπονται ἀκούοντες διὰ τὸ φύσει δηλαδὴ τὰς ἐρωτικὰς ἐννοίας γλυκείας εἶναι.

Odysseus, just like the other Phaeacians, rejoiced in his heart, upon listening to the song on Aphrodite’s adultery. If it is true that the philosopher should not lose his composure at such

87 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:122.15–20 Stallbaum.

88 *Commentary on the Iliad* 3:342.26–343.4; 4:938.24–26 Van der Valk.

89 *Commentary on the Iliad* 2:815.4–10 Van der Valk.

90 *Prologue to the Commentary on Pindar* 9.3, p. 10.14–19 Kambylis.

91 *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:3.6 Van der Valk.

92 Cf. e.g. *Commentary on the Iliad* 1:763.4; 2:602.18; 3:203.28 Van der Valk; *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:288.33 Stallbaum. Athena, guiding Odysseus, is allegorized as σύνεσις (*Commentary on the Iliad* 1:335.20–21 Van der Valk).

93 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 1:304.5–9 Stallbaum.

a base hearing, we can say that he is not simply pleased by what is narrated, but, rather, by the rhythm and the harmony created by the skilled singer. Also, perhaps he goes even deeper into the allegorical meaning of the story, in a more philosophical manner, and does not listen to it like the Phaeacians, who enjoy listening in a different way, as erotic contents are naturally sweet.

Eustathios singles out two different reactions to the song for Odysseus and the Phaeacians. Pleasure is at stake in both cases, but Odysseus is not expected to “fall apart” (διαχέεσθαι) or to be aroused by the salaciousness of Demodokos's story. His enjoyment lies in appreciating the ability of the singer, in seeing what makes his song such a good performance. Interestingly, allegorical interpretation is taken into account as a possible source of aesthetic appreciation, but it is not Eustathios's main concern. It comes—and just as a possibility—after rhythm and harmony. It seems that hermeneutical enjoyment has above all a rhetorical character.

I contend that this way of engaging with the text goes hand in hand with reading practices that are less desultory and close to extensive reading. It is perhaps not a coincidence that in commenting on the end of *Iliad* book 4, Eustathios clearly stresses the visual act of reading from, and leafing through, a book, even though the usual notion of “listener”—here turning into a spectator—is still present. We have seen above that the λήχνοι crave a polycentric narrative and that they can hardly focus on a single σκοπός. What interests them is not the final aim of the narrative, but rather digressions, expansions, the amount of detail, and ultimately strong emotional arousal. On the contrary, Odysseus, who as we have seen plays the role of the ideal συνετός and is also an image of Eustathios himself,⁹⁴ goes straight to the σκοπός of the narrative. The Sirens can be interpreted as representing learning, according to a certain allegorical reading of the Homeric text; that is why Odysseus is eager to listen to their song. However, even in his eagerness, he does not lose his self-control: avoiding superfluities, he sticks to the song only long enough to grasp its aim and appreciate its sweetness.⁹⁵

ἐν οἷς ἐφάνη Ὀδυσσεὺς εἰς τοσοῦτον καὶ μόνον ἀπονάμενος τῶν Σειρήνων, εἰς ὅσον μαθεῖν τὸν σκοπὸν τῆς αὐτῶν ᾠδῆς καὶ μαρτυρεῖν τῇ τοῦ μέλους γλυκύτητι.

In those words it also appears that Odysseus enjoyed the Sirens only long enough to learn the aim of their song and testify to the sweetness of its melody.

Since antiquity the Sirens episode has lent itself to a variety of metapoetic interpretations. Recently, Pietro Pucci has construed the whole episode as a “reading scene” embedded in the poem, where Odysseus listens to the Sirens as he will later listen to Demodokos at the Phaeacian court.⁹⁶ If this holds true, Eustathios's notes become all the more significant in the context of possible reading practices evoked in the commentaries. According to the allegorical interpretation adduced by Eustathios,⁹⁷ Odysseus does not avoid the Sirens' song altogether, or in Pucci's terms, he does not “escape that reading scene.”⁹⁸ Quite the contrary, he faces it on his own terms—and we may add, in the “right” way. Although he avidly desires (γλίχεται) to listen to the song,⁹⁹ Odysseus arranges everything so as to not be carried away by it. As with Demodokos, he proves immune (here forcibly immune) to the seductions of storytelling which elsewhere he masters to perfection.

This emphasis on the virtues of σύνεσις and on the preeminence of σκοπός points again to specific practices of reading and listening. To focus on the ultimate aim of a given text implies a conscientious consumption of the text, excluding desultory reading or the fascination with “parerga.” As we have seen, such slow consumption is required in particular for religious or moral contents. It comes therefore as no surprise that the same approach surfaces when it comes to moralizing readings

94 See Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 25, n. 17.

95 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:5.1–2 Stallbaum.

96 P. Pucci, *The Song of the Sirens* (Lanham, 1998), 175–77. On the dangers implied by the Sirens' θέλξις, see L. H. Pratt, *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics* (Ann Arbor, 1993), 77–81.

97 On this interpretation in ancient and late antique times, see K. Berthelot, “Philo and the Allegorical Interpretation of Homer in the Platonic Tradition (with an Emphasis on Porphyry's *De antro nymphaeum*),” in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*, ed. M. Niehoff (Leiden and New York, 2012), 161–72.

98 Pucci, *Song of the Sirens*, 177.

99 *Commentary on the Odyssey* 2:4.43 Stallbaum.

of pagan texts. We find it, for instance, in the epigram devoted to *Leukippe and Kleitophon* preserved in the *Palatine Anthology* (AP 9.203) and ascribed to Photios or Leo the Philosopher. The last four lines encourage the reader to focus on the ultimate message of the novel, avoiding excessive desires, both readerly and bodily:¹⁰⁰

εἴπερ δὲ καὶ σὺ σωφρονεῖν θέλῃς, φίλος,
μὴ τὴν πάρεργον τῆς γραφῆς σκόπει θέαν,
τὴν τοῦ λόγου δὲ πρῶτα συνδρομὴν μάθε·
νυμφοστολεῖ γὰρ τοὺς ποθοῦντας ἐμφρόνως.

If you wish to be continent, friend,
Do not look at marginal aspects,
but first learn the moral of the discourse;
for it prepares for the altar those who desire
with continence.

Later texts also adopt the same attitude about allegorical or moralizing reading of contemporary romances. More than a century after Eustathios, Manuel Philes, introducing Andronikos Palaiologos's "erotic book," advises prospective readers to behave "sagaciously."¹⁰¹ In so doing he discourages them from yielding to the refinements of diction and the enticements of narrative:¹⁰²

100 On the epigram see T. Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the Ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge, 2011), 168–70.

101 Krumbacher controversially identified the romance summarized by Philes with *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*. The early twentieth-century debate on the identification is summarized in *Le roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoe*, *Texte établi et traduit par Michel Pichard* (Paris, 1956), XVI, nn. 4 and 5, and later in B. Knös, "Qui est l'auteur du roman de Callimaque et de Chrysorrhoe?" *Hellenika* 17 (1962): 274–295. See also R. Beaton, *The Medieval Greek Romance* (London, 2012), 190–92; C. Livanos, "Byzantine Poetic Tradition," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson (New York, 2010), 205–7. Skepticism about the identification with *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* is expressed by P. A. Agapitos, *Narrative Structure in the Byzantine Vernacular Romances* (Munich, 1991), 16, n. 16; P. A. Agapitos and O. L. Smith, *The Study of Medieval Greek Romance: A Reassessment of Recent Work* (Copenhagen, 1992), 55–56. On the two readerships described in the poem see again P. A. Agapitos, "SO Debate: Genre, Structure and Poetics in the Byzantine Vernacular Romances of Love," *SO* 79 (2004): 7–58, here 18; idem, "Writing, Reading and Reciting," 157–58.

102 The poem was edited in 1896 by E. Martini ("A proposito di una poesia inedita di Manuel File," *RIL* 29 [1896]: 460–71). The quotation comprises lines 14–29 (p. 466 Martini).

Σὺ δὲ σκόπει, βέλτιστε, τὸν νοῦν τῶν λόγων,
καὶ σύνες εὐθύς τοῦ σκοποῦ τῶν πραγμάτων,
πρὸς γὰρ τὰ καλὰ προτροπὴν σοὶ δεικνύει,
κἂν ἐμφάσεις ἔρωτος ἢ βίβλος φέρη·

.....
Βούλει κατορθοῦν; Πρὸς τὰ <τοῦ> τέλους βλέπε,
καὶ σαυτὸν ἐγγύμναζε τοῖς πρώτοις πόνοις
μηδὲν πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰσβαλόντας ὀκλάσας.
Εἰ δ' οὐ κατορθοῦν, ἀλλ' ἀναπίπτειν θέλῃς,
τὸ καλὸν αὐτόματον οὐ δεῖ σε κρίνειν.
Καὶ ῥέγχε λοιπὸν ἑκταθεὶς ἐπὶ κλίνῃς,
μὴ καὶ ῥυπανθῇ δυστυχῶς τὸ βιβλίον
φυλλοκρινηθὲν ἐκ τριβῆς κακοσχόλου.

You, then, my dearest, observe the meaning of
the story
and grasp straight away the subject of its content,
for the book points out to you an incitement to
virtue,
even if it presents discussions about love;

.....
Do you want to succeed? Look toward the end
of the story:
Exercise yourself through the initial efforts
and do not avoid them once they have fallen
upon you.
Yet, if you do not wish to succeed, and you
prefer to give up,
you had better not judge beauty off the cuff,
you had better go snoring, stretched on your bed,
lest you unluckily defile the book,
badly worn away by your selection. (trans. P. A.
Agapitos, modified)

As stressed by Panagiotis Agapitos, we have here, carefully described, two types of audience: the one "careful and diligent" and, I add, dutifully practicing extensive reading; the other, "careless and slothful," busy with intensive reading.¹⁰³ Indeed, Philes warns the reader against the dangers of being distracted by superficial embellishments, and thus losing sight of the true meaning underlying the romance. Philes, moreover, stresses quite clearly that the sagacious reader is aware of the work's narrative refinement, even though he does not fall prey to the plot. Such a reader does not jump

103 Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting," 158.

forward, fastidiously skipping annoying passages and making premature aesthetic judgments.¹⁰⁴

In a nutshell, Philes outlines an ideal reader closely resembling Eustathios's *συνετός*. His approach to the *μῦθος* discourages and scorns strong emotional responses to the text. The wise reader knows where to look, going straight to the book's final aim. Philes' "book defiler," on the other hand, bears some resemblance to Eustathios's hungry Scythian. Both hunger for narratives of questionable content (pagan myths and erotic tales) and both devote themselves to a kind of consumption liable to be censured and rather private.

There are also crucial differences, however, as is natural for two texts that do not belong to the same period or milieu. For Eustathios, rhetoric has the lion's share, prevailing over allegory or moralizing reading. Most important, the narrative beauty of the poems is ultimately nourished and sustained by the desires of the *λίχνοι*, who are endowed with a certain, indirect authorial agency, as we have seen. Eustathios acknowledges the inevitability of a "gluttonous," emotional approach to the Homeric creations, even though he does not identify with it. Eustathios, like Odysseus, regards himself as a *συνετός*, that is to say a professional reader fully in command of the rhetorical techniques deployed by Homer.

104 In interpreting lines 27–29, Agapitos seems to imply that the careless reader enjoys himself over the book while lying in bed, smitten with the romance's erotic content (Agapitos, "Writing, Reading and Reciting," 158). The *κακόσχολος* "reacts only spontaneously" to the story (ibid. and Agapitos, "SO Debate: Genre," 18). I would like to suggest here an alternative and perhaps complementary reading: *φυλλοκρίνω* points to a conscious selection of passages. Studies on manuscripts produced in the West have shown that it is possible to identify the preferences of medieval readers by looking at the marks of dirt left on individual pages (see K. M. Rudy, "Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* [2010]: 1–26). Philes' lines could suggest a similar phenomenon: the reader goes back to the same pleasurable passages time and again, thus staining the relevant pages. Such an interpretation would be in tune with Philes' strong criticism of desultory reading practices. Finally, *φυλλοκρίνω* conveys the same image as *σπερμολόγος*: a selective, utilitarian, and—why not?—pleasurable picking and choosing.

To sum up, the exegesis of the *Commentaries* reshapes ancient concepts and analytical tools in order to reflect the society in which Eustathios lives and operates. The emphasis on reader response found in the scholia paves the way to the definition of the *λίχνος* reader, who bears many resemblances to the audience of young pupils and amateur literati addressed by Eustathios and his fellow intellectuals in twelfth-century Constantinople. Similarly, Eustathios borrows from Pindar the word that defines the "professional" reader, thus finding a suitable self-labeling. Interestingly, *συνετός* in the original context was both exclusive and inclusive. It was exclusive in that it created a distinction between sagacious readers and *τὸ πᾶν* (in Eustathios's view), the vast majority unable to penetrate the subtlety of Pindar's *Odes*.¹⁰⁵ It was inclusive in that it created a bond between Pindar and his commissioners and patrons. It was a hallmark of aristocracy. Some sixteen centuries later, Eustathios reshapes the term, focusing on its exclusive character: *συνετός* becomes a byword for the expert reader, drawing a line between the professional literati and their audience, including commissioners and patrons. The latter are envisaged as voracious readers; at times unfocused, eager for rhetorical expansion, fictional narrative devices, and strong emotions. And yet, paradoxically, the *συνετοί* could not exist without the *λίχνοι*, just as Odysseus would not be able to prove his rhetorical prowess without the Phaeacians listening to his (fictional?) tales. In the narrative economy of the poems, just as in the cultural economy of the Komnenian era, the two groups are inextricably bound together.

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105 See n. 81 above.

☞ PRELIMINARY VERSIONS OF THIS PAPER HAVE been presented on several occasions at Dumbarton Oaks, Durham, Oxford, Uppsala, and Thessaloniki. I would like to thank the audiences for their suggestions and in particular Margaret Mullett, Panagiotis Agapitos, Marina Bazzani, Marc Lauxtermann, Barbara Graziosi, Eric Cullhed, and Ingela Nilsson.

The core of this paper was written during my time as Newton International Fellow in Durham and I would like to thank the British Academy for its generous support. I am also greatly indebted to Alexander Riehle and Przemysław Marciniak, who read preliminary drafts, as well as to the two anonymous *DOP* reviewers. As ever, all remaining errors are my own.